THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) India's total external debt outstanding, along with its variation in absolute terms and as a proportion of GDP for the last three years, is given below. As a proportion of GDP, India's external debt has declined from 21.1 per cent in 2001-02 to 17.6 per cent in 2003-04.

Year	Total External debt (US $ million)	Increase (+)/ Decrease(-) over previous year (US $ million)	Ratio of External debt to GDP
2001-02	98,757	-2375	21.1
2002-03	104,870	6113	20.2
2003-04	112,515	7645	17.6

Panchayati Raj Institution in J&K

*89. PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the importance of strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu & Kashmir; and

(b) if so, the details of the schemes that were initiated in Jammu & Kashmir and the progress made thereon during the last three years ending on 3.9.2004?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1999 is not applicable to the State of Jammu & Kashmir. Panchayats in Jammu & Kashmir have been constituted and are functioning under the Jammu & Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989. The State Government has recently communicated their request for assistance in order to provide the basic minimum facilities to the Panchayati Raj Institutions like office equipment and furniture, library facilities and community viewing facilities to all the Panchayats of the State to help establish the credibility of these institutions. The request is under process.